U.S. Senator Malcolm Wallop

News Release

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CONTINUING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS SPUR SENATORS' OUTRAGE

WASHINGTON--Ongoing violations of human rights in East Timor have raised the ire of 52 United States senators who have asked President Bush to play a greater role in resolving the conflict.

In a November 25 letter to the President, initiated by Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-WY), the senators outlined their concerns and advocated a stronger and more effective U.S. stance in the region.

Before its year-end adjournment, the Senate approved a resolution encouraging the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to appoint a special envoy to assist in the resolution of the East Timorese conflict in pursuit of the right of self-determination of the East Timorese people.

The former Portuguese colony has received world-wide attention in recent weeks after a November 12 massacre of 75 to 100 civilians by Indonesian security forces.

Wallop said that at least 100,000 people out of a population of 700,000 have died in East Timor since it was invaded and occupied by Indonesia on December 7, 1975.

Attached is a copy of the senators' letter.

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MALCOLM WALLOP
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November 25, 1991

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We have grown increasingly concerned about the human rights and humanitarian problems in the former Portuguese colony of East Timor. Our concern has heightened in the wake of the massacre on November 12, when Indonesian security forces killed between 75 and 100 civilians during a funeral procession for an East Timorese youth killed by Indonesian troops on October 28, 1991. We are aware that the Department of State has acknowledged formally at least some aspects of the problems in East Timor. Nonetheless, it appears that further action is warranted in light of continuing reports of repression in East Timor.

Various disturbing reports had come to our attention even prior to the November 12 massacre. Reliable sources in East Timor relate stories of Indonesian forces and those under their control using razor blades to cut the faces of young East Timorese dissenters. Reports from Amnesty International and Asia Watch in recent months detail torture, beatings, and other serious abuses of East Timorese. These, as well as other reports of atrocities, belie reports of improvements in the human rights situation in East Timor and lead us to conclude that the United States needs to take a stronger stand on this matter. We must make it clear to the Indonesian authorities that we are aware of and monitoring closely the situation in East Timor.

On the humanitarian front, we would like to register our concern over the inordinately high rates of tuberculosis, malaria, malnutrition, and infant mortality that exist in East Timor. Such problems are particularly worrisome when one recalls the catastrophic famine that occurred largely at the hands of the Indonesian military in the late 1970s. The United States could be an effective and positive force in this region by seeking ways to insure that the Indonesian government cooperates with private organizations, both secular and religious, that are in a position to help address these problems.

In addition, we would hope that the United States would be alert to any diplomatic openings that may present themselves in the future, with an eye toward a political solution that might end the needless suffering in East Timor and bring about true self-determination for the territory. The Senate showed its support for such action by passing a resolution on November 21, 1991, which stated, "the President should support the immediate introduction of a resolution in the General Assembly instructing the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to appoint a Special Rapporteur for East Timor to assist in the resolution of the East Timorese conflict in pursuit of the right of self-determination of the East Timorese people."

In conclusion, let us say that we are keenly aware of the value of close relations with the Government of Indonesia. It is precisely because of these close relations that we believe that the Government of Indonesia will be responsive to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Alfonse D'Amato

Jesse Helms

Terry Sanford

Daniel K Inouye

John McCain

Alan Cranston

Chuck Grassley

Wyche Fowler

Joe Biden

Bill Bradley

Thomas S. Foley

Mitch McConnell

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Dec. 6, 1991

Fax message for Mr. Allan Nairn

Total of 8 pages

Allan-- Tony got it right.

Best,

Arnold